

## CHAPTER IX

### RELIGIOUS BEHAVIOUR, ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS IN MAGIC

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#### I. RELIGION AND PSYCHOLOGY OF PERSONALITY

It seems that man's apprehension goes beyond his natural environment, and there is an interest amongst human beings in the supernatural and suprasensory forces. Religion and religious activities are the responses to these psychical needs of the individual. Religious beliefs and religious consciousness are imbibed by the individual during the process of his socialisation. As the result of training and experience the religious beliefs and ideals are internalised and they themselves become the forces of behaviour. Religion thus becomes a part of individual's psychological make up - his personality.

Psychologically religion combines in it both reason and emotion. It is man's emotional need to find relationship with the powers beyond his control - supernatural powers. These needs are satisfied in concrete manner and definite form through rituals.

Secondly, religion is a powerful social control which sustains the life of the individual as well as that of the society.

The conception of the super-natural power differs from tribe to tribe and society to society. Primitive culture is characterised by a sort of 'power politics' and a struggle for mastery of life and all that it stands for.<sup>1</sup>

The pre-literate people distinguish between two parts in the super-natural - a sacred part and a profane part. "The sacred part", Durkheim believes, "consists of religion and the profane part consists of magic". Both the religion and magic are tools of a primitive man to meet the crisis in life. They are related to their biological and social needs, the existence of the

1. Mazumdar, D.N. : Races and Cultures of India, p.220. Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1931.

individual as well as the society.

## II. NATURE OF THE DANGI RELIGION

A pre-literate tribe like the Dangi has very limited means of exploration. It lacks in detailed knowledge and equipment of scientific investigation and is more governed by fiction, superstition and tradition than by objective apprehension of facts. Hence, whatever phenomenon is beyond their understanding, and they cannot explain by mechanical laws of causation is deified and personified. The object of the phenomenon itself is supposed to possess 'life' and 'force'. It is attributed motives and prejudices. The uncontrollable and inscrutable phenomenon are thought of as divine and super-natural.

It need not be believed that because the Dangis are pre-literate, they are pre-logical or irrational. The mind of a pre-literate man is not different from that of any civilised individual. The laws governing his logic and reasoning are the same as those followed by us. The conclusion derived by us that the spread of a disease is due

to the pollution of milk is as valid as the conclusion of a Dangi that the spread of a disease is due to the evil eye. The beliefs and actions are 'irrational' not because they are illogical in their influence from certain premises but because the premises themselves are not valid by a scientific analysis.

### III. THE GODS OF THE DANGIS

The gods and goddesses of the Dangis are varied and numerous. They are the creation of local circumstances. The animals, plants, trees and places which are useful or fearful, the forces of nature like rain which are related to the individual's existence, and the inscrutables are held in high esteem, looked upon with awe, and are worshipped. Belief in magic and witchcraft is universal. The Bombay Gazetteer (2) writes "Though nominally Hindus they know very little of the Brahman religion, Hanuman, the monkey god is occasionally seen in their villages. But their chief objects are the

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2. The Bombay Gazetteer, Vol. XIII, pp.600-601.

boundary god 'Simaria Dev', the Snake god, and the tiger god, in whom they see the souls of their ancestors become incarnate. They believe in omens and greatly dread of the power of witches of the evil eye"..... "They are believed mostly to die of spirit, possession as the saying is, 'Brahmins die of indigestion, Sonars from bile and Kumbis from spirit".(3).

'Dev' is a general term used for all gods. For example, if somebody is diseased or deceased a Dangi would say, "It is the matter in the hands of 'Dev' (God). Pointing to the remains of the worship on the road he would say, "Do not cross over it, it is a place of worship of 'Dev'." This God is referred to as 'Bhagwan', 'Ishwar' (Ishar), 'Uparwala' (one who stays above) etc.

Bhangubhai, an old man of sixty years told me, "'Bhagwan' or 'Ishar' is an all powerful omnipresent entity. He is a benevolent judge and punishes and praises for our deeds, bad and good. He is equal to all and impartial. A 'bad' man may escape punishment in this world but god is there to look

it. You cannot hide "anything from him". 'Bhagwan' represents the highest god but is free from any particular trait. It has not been given any concrete form but is envisaged as the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world.

The Dangi distinguishes between this world and the other world. He also distinguishes between 'Sarag' (Heaven) and 'Narak' (Hell). They have a very clear idea about the future and believe in the transmigration of the soul. They believe in re-birth and life after death and are convinced that ghosts and spirits wander about and haunt the places where the deceased lived.

(a) Gods of Corn :

1. Kanasari Devi : 'Kana' which is a sanskrit word means a 'grain'. So Kanasari is a goddess of corn. She has an important and higher place in the galaxy of <sup>the</sup> gods and is worshipped on all important social celebrations. In a newly built house first this goddess is ceremonially established in it before it is used for residence. If the house

catches fire and is burnt, it is thought that the goddess is angry. She is worshipped and a cock is offered in sacrifice. The Dangis have respect for and fear of this goddess. They swear in the name 'Kanasari Devi' and an individual is trusted if he takes an oath in her name. Even a child shows respect for this devi. He would not put his foot on the food grains or pluck the 'darbha' (a kind of grass).

2. Kotharin Devi : Goddess Kotharin has her abode in the 'kothar' (the storeroom of the house). She is supposed to look after and protect the storage of corn in the house. If the corn is stolen or spoiled by insects, it is thought because of some fault in the worship of the goddess. If the storeroom is burnt it is because of the wrath of this 'devi'. She is worshipped and propitiated to look after her 'children'.

There is acute scarcity of corn and starvation is normal. This explains why the Dangis have deified the gods of corn and water and built up a body of rituals, ceremonies and festivals pertaining

to corn, water and agriculture. The celebration of festivals and performance of rituals in turn make them aware of the food situation and prepare them for the fight with life.

(b) Deities of Water and Wind :

The water and wind are deified by Hindus also. The god of rains the Dangis call the 'Pan Dev' and that of wind they call the 'Bhutiya Dev'. 'Pan' is derived from the word 'Pani' which means water. "Pandev", said Iku of Kalibel, "is worshipped sometime after there are a few showers of rain and the seeds have germinated. If the rain is delayed we anxiously look for it, and perform the rites to please the god. We go to the hill of Kuwathia in the Western Dangs, either one of the caves and worship there. It is believed that at the end of the rites there is a sudden flow of water from within. The quantity of rains that year is judged from the quantity of the water flow". It is obvious that when people's fate is dependent on the mercy of 'rains', they look upon the rain as 'life giver' and deify it in the form of God. If there is



drought it is believed that 'God' is angry. Such beliefs give the people courage to face the difficulties and adjust.

The Bhutiya Dev is the deity of cyclone. Sometimes the wind makes great damage. The roofs are flown away, trees uprooted. It causes fire in the forest and also helps to spread the fire over a large area. Hence, it is feared and worshipped.

(c) Deity of the Hill :

The Dungen dev, the god of the mountains resides on the peaks. Not all <sup>the</sup> mountains and hills are worshipped. But there are a few chosen places which are thought to be the abode of the god. The dungen dev is not worshipped regularly but once a year. The Dungen dev is an important and powerful god. He is a source of power to the 'Bhagats'.

(d) Deities of the Village :

1. Goan Dev, Simalya (Simania) Dev, and Mavli Ma are the deities which preside over the village.

'Simalya' mean 'Sim' the outskirts of the village. Simalya Dev is the god which guards the limits of the village and protects the people.

A stone at the end of the village besmeared with red lead and sitted under a wallless roof is the Goan Dev. This god looks after the welfare of the village people and protects them against the natural calamities.

2. Mavli Ma : Mavli Ma means goddess mother. Her favours are solicited on all the occasions in life and utmost care is taken that she is not displeased. Any unforeseen calamity or accident like untimely death, epidemic or the failure of crops etc. <sup>is</sup> ~~are~~ first attributed to the wrath of this goddess. She is offered promises when the disease is incurable or the woman has difficulty in delivery. She is not <sup>a</sup> benign goddess and precautions are taken not to displease her. Once in a year the whole village collectively worships her and offers her the sacrifices. "This is a powerful goddess. So she requires a big sacrifice, that of a goat". In spite of the worship if something untoward happens

it is accredited to some mistake in the performance of the worship.

Psychologically this kind of worship and understanding though not 'rational', is a tool of rationalisation. It soothes the minds of the people in sufferings and gives them courage to face or bear them. It has a social aspect too. It makes people united in facing a common difficulty. It is a social force which binds people together.

(e) The Animal Gods :

1. Among the animals the tiger, the snake and the cow are worshipped. The snake god is called 'Nagdev'. The tiger god is called 'Wagh Dev'. The tiger god is more feared than loved. At the end of many villages are found wooden planks on which the images of the tiger, serpent and moon have been carved. All the narrow passes and the places which the tiger seems to visit often are the abode of the god.

The tiger god is worshipped so that it may not do any injury to the cattle or man. It may

not kill the cattle when they are grazing in the forest, or a man when he is passing alone. In spite of the worship the Dangi is not sure whether his cattle are safe.

Tiger god is held in reverence, yet a tiger is killed. This attitude is similar to the primitive conception of god, apart from its form. The tiger as an animal is not worshipped. What is worshipped is the tiger god. Similar attitude is found among the Bhils(4) and the Warlis(5) in other districts also.

The cow is called the 'Gavatri Ma'. She is a pious animal. Her urine is used in performing rites after death and other purificationary rites. The Dangis also swear by cow.

Among the other goddesses there are Ihamai and Dehar Mata.

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4. Naik, T. B. : The Bhils - a Study. Bharatiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh, Delhi, 1956.
  5. Save, K. J. : The Warlis. Padma Publications, Bombay, 1945.

2. Maruti Dev : Maruti known as Hanuman - the ape devotee of Rama is worshipped all over India and also among all types of pre-literate tribes. He is an emblem of energy and power. In the Dangs his image is carved on a stone and is sitted under a tree. In Pipaldahad there is a small temple of Hanumanan. Some Dangsi social reformers have practised penance in isolation at the feet of Hanuman(6).

(f) Hindu Gods :

Some of the Hindu gods like Rama, Sita, Mahadev, Parvati are honoured and treated as gods by the Dangis. They have become the characters of their tales and songs. One such song is as follows :

A hut was built, the floor plastered  
with cowdung,  
Decorated it was, with nagarvel leaves,  
Slept Sita in it, her two children too,  
Went out Sita to the pond to fetch water,  
Ravan took away Sita,  
A fight took place on the narrow pass,  
Ram, Laxmana brought back Sita.

6. Naik Ghelubhai : The Dangs and the Dangsi  
(In Gujarati), An unpublished Dissertation.

It can be seen that the song is not true to the traditional facts. Similarly in the story of Rama also there is modification. It reflects the local atmosphere and give it a local colour. The Sun and the Moon are referred as Surajdev and Chandradev. These gods are benevolent and benign.

#### IV. FESTIVALS

The festivals are the land marks in the yearly life of a people. The celebration of the festivals has a social and a religious aspect. It has a significant psychological aspect too. Through observation and participation in the festivals, the individual gets accustomed in a natural way to life and his development takes a definite shape. It is all the more true in the case of pre-literate tribe like the Dangis. The Dangis are pre-eminently agriculturists so their festivals are also agriculture-centred. Most of the festivals fall during the agricultural season. They are as follows :

- (a) Akha Tij
- (b) Tera
- (c) Pola

- (d) Wagh Baras
- (e) Simgan
- (f) Pachavi
- (g) Dashera
- (h) Diwali

Some of them are described below.

(a) Akha Tij :

According to the Hindu calender Akha Tij falls on the third day of <sup>the</sup> first fortnight of Vaishakha. As the Dangis are illiterate, they count differently. This day, according to them comes after passing of four Sundays and four Tuesdays after the day of Holi. The ninth turn, it may be a Tuesday or a Sunday is Akha Tij. This is more or less an accurate calculation.

Before a week of Akha Tij, in a basket seeds of all kinds of corn, i.e. Nagli, Warai, etc. are sown. They are watered for all these days. Within these seven days the seeds germinate, their growth is observed with interest and curiosity.

The richness of this growth is indicative of the richness of crops in that season. The basket on this day is worshipped with 'Kumkum' and ceremonially thrown into the water.

This celebration has a great psychological significance to the people like the Dangis whose main source of subsistence is only the harvest season. It gives them good hopes about the harvest and creates confidence in them to fight and face against the natural calamities.

(b) Tera :

This festival falls in the month of 'Ashadha' when the rains have fallen in sufficient quantity, and the earth is covered with green growth. This festival marks the beginning of eating of the produce of the rains. All the members of the family go out and search for Tera leaves. The leaves are washed and boiled, some salt is added to it. It is prepared in a liquid form. Before this day, making use of the green products of the monsoon is a taboo. This code is an illustration of social control and indicative of the compact life of the Dangis.



(c) Pola :

This festival falls in 'Bhadrapada'. By this time the crops have grown up sufficiently in the fields. This day marks the beginning of the use of the new crops. When the crops are ready in the fields of all the families without exception in the village, a day is fixed for this celebration. The members of the family go to their fields, cut a few stalks of 'Makkai' or 'Nagli' and cook at home. This new produce is served to the cow and <sup>the</sup> bullocks in the house also.

Before this day no Dangi thinks of stealing the crops and eating alone. This attitude is significant, for it serves many purposes. It is a good instrument of social control and helps to maintain social solidarity. It adds to the richness of the social and group life of the village. Secondly, it protects the crops from being spoiled by the indiscriminate and untimely use. For, if the people use the crops even before they are ready, much of the crops will be spoiled and the returns will be very low.

(d) Wagh Baras :

The 'Twelfth day of the second fortnight of 'Ashwin' is known as 'Wagh Baras'. The name indicates that it is a day of Wagh (tiger) worship. The Dangis offer a sacrifice of a cock to the Wagh Dey, and request for his pleasure and favour.

In the evening when the cattle return from grazing, they are cornered outside the village. All the passages to the village are closed, only a narrow opening is kept. On this way an egg is put and the cows are made to run over it and enter the village. If at the end it is found that the egg is unbroken, it is believed that there will be good rains and crops next year. If the egg is broken it indicates scarcity of rain and having poor crops. If the egg remains unbroken, psychologically it helps them to feel hopeful for the next year and gives them confidence.

(e) Simgan - (The Festival of Holi) :

The festival of Holi is celebrated on the fifteenth day of Falgun. Among all celebrations

the day of Holi is of great significance to the Dangis. Holi known as Simgan, i.e. 'the song of the forest' to the Dangis is celebrated for five days. Men, women and children put on new dresses, decorate their person as well as the house and sing and dance for all the five days. This festival is second to none.

In the first of the five days, the full moon day of Falgun during the day time, children and youth collect firewoods. A long piece of a branch of a tree is fixed in a pit, and a heap of firewood is made around it.

At about seven o'clock in the evening all the villagers are collected. The Patel and a few important persons of the village worship the goddess Holika. Two branches of a tree at distance of three feet in between are fixed in the ground near the bonfire. In this space a coconut is put. Everybody puts a fistful of corn there. One of the villagers who has become an expert by experience spells something and gives permission to set fire. Two persons are ready with the burning sticks in their hands.

They ask for the permission of the people and set it to fire, thus bonfire is lit. The children and elders shout with joy, throw corn, coconuts, dried coconut chips into fire and take five ceremonial rounds of the fire.

The children dance around and sing :  
 Holibai, Holibai, in which month you come,  
 I came in Falgun month....  
 What gifts you will take Holibai....  
 I shall take firewood....  
 What gifts shall you take Holibai,  
 I shall require a pit to erect the pole.

Thus Holibai asks for the gift of mango, leaves, coconut chips etc.

At the end, everybody embraces and saying 'Ram Ram' greetseach other and disperse. People in whose family a death has occured, as a mark of grief and sorrow do not attend this function. Hence some people go to such bereaved people and console. Some observe a fast on that day and then break the fast after worshipping the Holi goddess.

The bonfire is kept burning for five days and for all the days the young men of the village sleep at night near the fire. Those who fail to do so are fined.

On the following days, young and old, men and women rejoice by sprinkling coloured water, and red powder on each other. Some may use the black suit of the cart-wheel and ash, and disfigure the faces of others. It is an occasion of making fun of each other and merriment.

Dancing and singing are the main occupations of the youths. They put on new dresses and play on musical instruments and dance. Some put on funny dresses also. A male may put on a female's dress and play the part of a woman. They move in a group from house to house in the village and go to the nearby villages also. On the fifth day the bonfire is ceremonially put out. People ask each other's apology for mistakes or wrongs done to them.

The <sup>festival of</sup> Holi marks the end of the spring season, and the beginning of the agricultural season. People do major purchases on this occasion of Holi and Diwali.

The festival of Holi is a collective celebration. It helps in decreasing the gap between persons and cementing their relations. By embracing and asking apologies they forget the bitter memories if any and come out as friends.

The practice of sleeping near the fire has significance. It has precautionary and utilitarian value. For, because of wind at night it may happen that a few sparklings of fire may set the dry leaves on fire. Once the fire is set, it is difficult to bring it under control. Hence, this practice of sleeping at night is necessary.

#### V. THE SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTER OF THE FESTIVALS

The celebration of festivals and <sup>the</sup> community worship of <sup>the</sup> gods are important, for they provide ample opportunities for mixing with each other and enrich the group life. They keep the people united against a common difficulty. The celebrations and rituals have a social sanction behind them, hence they are an important means of social control. They are traditional guides of individual's personal and

social behaviour. Participation in these festivals and worships smoothen the process of individual's socialisation. Religion is an effective socialising agent, for religious practices and beliefs are not thrust from outside, as the individual feels they are coming from within the daily life.

Secondly, these festivals and religious activities are spread over the year in such a way that they serve the purpose of dates in a calendar<sup>a</sup>. Every Dangi automatically learns and knows ~~that~~ what he is supposed to do and when. Moreover, a religious ceremony performed at the initiation of an economic activity gives prevision and creates confidence. If an activity is done ritually it brings accuracy in its performance. A sense of respect and honour is created about it. For example, worshipping and offering a sacrifice at the time of harvesting and bringing the crops to the threshing floor and taking home assures them that now 'the crops' are safe and nothing untoward would happen'. Deification of corn~~s~~ as <sup>the</sup> goddess creates an attitude of respect and care towards corn. The worship of Mavli Ma and Wagh Dev etc. prepares them to cope with the sphere of the unknown and unpredictable.

The Dangis believe in the existence of ghosts, spirits and witches. They have devised an elaborate process of fighting against their evil elements. "We are not much afraid of ghosts", said a Dangi, "as of witches." For, the ghost is the spirit of a dead one, while the witch is a woman living amongst us."

#### VI. GHOSTS AND SPIRITS

The Dangis believe that a person whose desire has remained unsatisfied, and who has earnestly craved for it becomes a ghost after death. The father of Bhikhu said, "Not all people remain behind after death. Some die thinking "there is no body to look after my wife", and some die thinking of their money. That kind of man becomes a ghost". The ghost enters the body of animals like a dog or a tiger and visits the persons. It harasses those with whom he had a cause for dispute, but remaining itself unseen. It makes peculiar noises and cries. There is something unhuman in its laughter. A ghost also appears before the cattle, unties them and leaves them free. All the animals are under its



control. Even the god has no control over the ghost. Ghosts often wander around the cemetery ground, hence no Dangi will pass by such places after evening.

The Dangis believe that the spirits of the dead have a tendency to visit his house hence they vacate the house and settle elsewhere, if a man has died inside the house. Raja of Gharvi left his newly built house without hesitation because of the death of his son inside the house.

When a man feels that he is harassed by a ghost, <sup>the</sup> Bhagat is called. The Bhagat by his 'vidya' can identify the person who has become the ghost, and ask him how he can be satisfied. Accordingly, the rites are performed and the ghost becomes 'free' and goes to <sup>the</sup> other world.

## VII. DAKAN, WITCH-CRAFT

When there is epidemic among the humans or cattle, when the patient's disease is incurable, when crops fail at the last moment, when the children do not survive or when somebody suddenly falls sick, the evil eye of a witch is suspected. A witch is a

female sorcerer. There are no apparent signs to know that a woman is a witch. "A witch woman has no horns over her head" said a Dangi.

All the witches of the village form a secret association and select one of them as a leader. The trainee for witchcraft has to undergo a strict ordeal under strict privacy. As a witch she has to forgo all personal relations and obey the order of the leader first. For imparting instruction a woman is selected only as a maiden but she can marry and live a regular life afterwards. After completion of training a witch has to pay the fees in the form of a human life. She selects a victim and makes it fall ill by her powers. Outwardly the victim meets a natural death.

A witch can take many forms, that of a jackal, a cat or a fly. She possesses extraordinary and superhuman powers. She can cross any distance within no time. A witch first procures a possession of her victim, his hair, excreta or tooth. She spells some mantras and performs some rituals directly over it. The impressions received by the possession directly passes to the possessor.

The 'Bhagat' is the greatest foe of the witches. Before his powers no tricks of even a powerful witch has any standing. He can undo what a witch has done. The rituals of finding a witch and counteracting her effects are done privately as well as publicity. If it is to be performed in public, permission of police is necessary so nobody beats the witch woman.

The following incident narrated to me will give some idea about the witchcraft\*. A son of the Karbhari of Kirli was seriously sick, and there were no hopes of his survival. It was thought to collect all the village people and hold 'Nishni' a public inquiry to find out the witch, who was suspected. A Bhagat was called. He warned the people that whosoever's wife is found to be a witch, he should believe it and submit.

The Bhagat put a small vessel of water and some 'adad' grains in a sieve in front of him. He took few grains in his hand, and began to drop them one by one in water. He found that many grains were

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\* Ramanlal and Manibhai, the Gramodhyog workers at Kirli narrated me this experience.

floating on the water. So he said, "This witch is much powerful". I shall have to read through a paper". He took a spotless unlined white paper and put some 'addad' grains on it. He began to spell something, took the paper in his hand and muttered something as if he was reading. The Bhagat, because of his learning, can see the face of the woman witch in the paper, where our ordinary eyes see nothing. He said, "It is not one witch, they are five". And he identified four women from those present there as witches. One of them was the step-mother of this boy. "The fifth woman," the Bhagat said, "cannot be identified, for her face is covered." The Patil's wife had not come there, and was sleeping in her house. A trick was played to make her get up,<sup>and</sup> the Bhagat could identify that she was the fifth witch. All the five were separated from the group. Four of them confessed that they had played a trick on this boy, but the Patil's wife did not. So it was suggested to put red chillie powder in her eyes and tie a bandage. It is believed that the chillie powder does no harm to a witch and she can see even though her eyes are closed with a bandage. Ultimately the

woman confessed that she was one of the five witches. Then they explained how and where they met and decided to take two human sacrifices. Out of the two lives they planned to take, one was a child of the brother-in-law of one of them, and the other this boy, ~~some~~ of the Karbhari. Then they said, "Now we shall be satisfied with the offerings of one fowl and one goat".

Then, the Bhagat waved a 'Savarani' (broom ) from head to leg wards over the lying patient, and said 'now the critical time is over and the boy will be alright'. The boy recovered within a few days."

Sometimes for personal gain magic is played by a witch. Kolgyabhai told me a case. "Once a man felt that he had lost the erection power of his penis. He was afraid of some magic and so consulted a Bhagat. The Bhagat told him that, "the wife of the Patel wants to have relation with you, and therefore she has played this trick". The man was afraid of going to that woman. But the Bhagat advised him that once you shall have to go to her and satisfy her passions, then you may never go again'. The man followed Bhagat's advice and regained his strength".

## VIII. MALE SORCERERS

Male sorcery has no destructive purpose nor there is any motive of personal gain behind it. There are two forms of this magic. One is eating charcoal and throwing them on one's own body. Second is finding out a coin hidden in earth (Khun Kadhvun).

This magic power is acquired after a long and enduring ordeal. The trainee of this 'Vidya' starts his training from the beginning of the monsoon and it lasts upto 'Diwali'. He goes to the place of 'Dungardev' and learns the 'vidya' from his preceptor. While under training he has to observe fast on Tuesdays and Sundays and strict abstinence from even the touch of a woman. Food served by a woman is a taboo. He cannot take his food until the iron plate and 'ghee' are not removed from the fire pit. He has to avoid the shadow of a menstruating woman. On 'Kali Chaudash; the fourteenth day of the second half of 'Ashwin' he performs the final rites and offers a fowl to his god and drinks its blood as 'prasad'.

The sorcerer in the normal course gets burnt, but when he eats fire specially as a magic rite because of his 'vidya' he does not get injured. He spreads charcoals before him, puts them in his mouth, and takes out and throws on his body\*.

Ghelubhai Naik\* of Swaraj Ashram once tested Bhavdu of Kirli, who claimed that he could find a hidden coin. Ghelubhai in his put about two hundred yards from the village first put a coin under a standing pole. But he took it out and hid it ultimately in the ceiling, after trying two other places. Then Bhavdu and his party came. Bhavdu and his men pointed out all the places where the attempts were made to hide the coin and ultimately stamped at the corner of the ceiling. The coin fell on the ground.

#### IX. THE BHAGAT

A Bhagat is an important man in the socio-religious activities of <sup>the</sup> Dangis. Because of his manifold functions, he enjoys a good reputation and status among the Dangis. Bhangubhai of Kirli himself a Bhagat told me some facts about Bhagatship.

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\* Ghelubhai Naik is one of the workers of Swaraj Ashram, Ahwa (Dangs).

A woman cannot become a Bhagat. There are two cadres of 'Bhagathood', a junior 'bhagat' and a senior 'bhagat'. A senior bhagat possesses more power than that of a junior one and is called a 'Kagdi bhagat', - one who has 'vidya' to see in a spotless white paper. The junior one does not make use of a paper.

Only a Bhagat can coach others in bhagathood. The training can be given only in monsoon in the month of 'Shravan'. It lasts for five days under strict privacy. The individual under training has to observe fast for all these days. The woman's touch and the shadow of a menstruating woman are prohibited. On the fifth day he worships the deity and memorises the 'mantras'. "The 'mantras', Bhangu-bhai of Kirli told me, "are as follows" :

" Blank paper, God of the  
heaven, God of the road, Clear the  
road, God of mouth, give answer.  
God of the heaven is in heaven. The  
bunyan tree leaf becomes the peppal  
tree leaf. The peppal leaf becomes the



bunyan leaf, salt water in the sea,  
 the sea water salty. The flowers,  
 the leaves are offered to the god,  
 Bhagat guru. Let me see the grains.  
 You go away, let me go. Mahadev give  
 me way. Won't go, you have the oath  
 of the goddess earth, and the goddess  
 Kanasari".

#### X. OMENS - GOOD AND BAD

The Dangis believe that the children are easily susceptible to the evil eye of others. So they put dots of black suit on the ears and forehead of the child. <sup>They</sup> Dangis consider certain signs as good and certain others as bad. While going to the other village if a man comes across an empty cart or a broken cart on the way he shall come back. An individual carrying a bundle of firewood or an empty vessel on the head is also a bad sign. If a serpent or a rabbit crosses his way, the Dangi suspects about the success of his mission. The cries of an owl and chibri are unauspicious. The wood-cutter is the most unauspicious bird. The tiger and the cow are

considered good signs. If the Morga bird is heard in the morning or the evening it is thought a sign of some death in the village. But if the same bird is heard in the afternoon or mid-night it is a sign of fortune.

#### XI. THE ETHICAL BELIEFS

The sense of 'right' or 'wrong', desirable or undesirable, moral or immoral is associated with every action and thereby the actions of other individuals are socially approved or disapproved. The Dangis do experience and discriminate which are generally regarded as important in our moral experience. There is observational ground for thinking that the Dangis do feel various emotions towards various types of behaviour and types of personality. They use words indicating contempt, disgust, disapproval on one occasion or another. Moreover, when discussing incestuous sexual relations between a man and his daughter, the facial expressions of the informant suggested revulsions and disgust and said, 'only a dog would do this'. In contrast when the Dangi discussed adultery they expressed disapproval but

definitely did not show signs of revulsion. The premarital sex relations not resulting in pregnancy do not become an object of public censure. Even if it results in pregnancy 'it is not good'. The girl is not condemned but married to the boy concerned. Drinking in moderate degree is tolerable but drunkenness and quarrelling are very bad. Telling a lie, stealing, cheating, encroaching upon the rights of others are unsocial and unhappy acts. Such a man is a bad man, nobody would trust him and keep social relations with him.

The underlying psychological principles of the ethical beliefs of the Dangis are reward and utility. An individual tends to develop a certain ethical attitude if the expression of it in behaviour has been rewarding to him, and if he believes that the expression of it in behaviour has been or will be rewarding to him. Secondly, the individual tends to have unfavourable (favourable) attitudes towards an act (a) according as he believes such acts have generally unfavourable (favourable) effects and (b) according as he himself has experienced either personally or through the experience of others such

unfavourable (favourable) effects. The individual learns through experience that it is useful and rewarding for maintaining personal integrity and social solidarity to follow a particular code of conduct and he accepts it.

Religion, magic, taboos, ethical beliefs, beliefs in auspicious or un auspicious omens etc. are found in every society. The faith in such aspects and its approval is a psychological necessity. Religious and magical rites are not isolated patterns of behaviour but connected with the social structure and economic activities of the people. They are woven in the texture of individual's life. So the interpersonal relations, pursuit of economic and day-to-day activities are controlled and directed in its proper way automatically. Their close integration with practical affairs, with economic wants, with critical period in human life cannot be accidental, and it seems therefore as if they have emerged in response to some fundamental human needs.

The social and religious taboos are the unwritten law of society. They are a great social control.

The magic rites and worship among the Dangis though often based on false premises have some practical end to perform, either the promotion of human welfare, the protection of existing interest, or the destruction of <sup>the</sup> individual's well being through malice or the desire for vengeance. The witchcraft practises like magic to produce sickness, magic to bring death etc. provide a native theory of failure, misfortune and death. Magic to avert misfortune or the cure of sickness or in form of counter magic are 'protective'. They create a kind of emotional relief and sense of satisfaction of performing duties towards the gods by pleasing them. These rites are socially approved and are a stimulus to effort and a factor of organisation of economic activity. The tales among the Dangis are not simply the stories preserved for their narrative and dramatic interest. They have a vital function to perform in providing a strongly emotional background to the body of religious beliefs and to ritual practices. The story of the 'goddess Fortune' discussed in next chapter is an appeal to the past in justification of a great deal of action in the present. It saves the individual

from experiencing remorse and feel at peace by compromising.

The religion of the Dangis has association with animism but it is not the whole truth. The Dangis do not merely worship the spirits and ghosts but have in their list many gods and beliefs common to the Hindus also. The Dangis cannot be considered backward Hindus like the Dublas and the Chodhras. There is a long way between the Dangi religion and Hinduism.

## XII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Both religion and magic are tools of the Dangis to meet the crisis in life. Their gods and ghosts, the religious practices and magic are related with their life and activities. The gods and goddesses of the Dangi which are varied and numerous reflect their anxiety and fear of the objects and events of nature. The creations of gods and rituals are an effort to gain a control over the events of nature and gain self-confidence against calamities. The celebrations of festivals which are spread out over the whole year provide them <sup>with</sup> a natural process of their

yearly activities. The festivals perform a vital function in creating and maintaining group solidarity and social life.

In a society where mutual distrust is prevalent the belief in black magic is not surprising. The practice of magic also has a psychological importance, for it gives an explanation of failure. For example, if crops fail it is explained that either somebody has played a black magic, or counter~~act~~ magic, or the magic performed to ensure the fertility of crops has not been carried out properly.

The Dangis believe in the witchcraft and that some women become the witches. One does not know whether his wife or mother is a witch or not. This belief in witch and witchcraft has a deep bearing on the relation between the male and the female, the husband and wife. There are male sorcerers. Sorcery is a 'vidya' which is achieved only after a long ordeal. A Bhagat is an important individual in the socio-religious life of the Dangis. The Bhagat, because of his 'vidya' can counteract the evil effects of the magic.

The Dangis do experience <sup>and</sup> ~~the~~ discriminate which are generally regarded as important in our moral experience. The underlying principles of the ethical beliefs are reward and utility.

Religion and art and folklore form the projective system. Religious practices and beliefs not only guide the behaviour of the people and develop certain personality traits, but they also reflect the people's inner anxieties, and are developed in order to express their traits. For example, the rituals of rain and corn worship and magic performed by the Dangis express their anxieties and struggle with nature. At the same time these practices develop the attitudes towards the objects and events and socialise the individual. The relation between culture and personality is thus reciprocal.

Art and folklore like religion also express people's inner conflicts and desires. The next chapter discusses the "Art and Folklore in the Dangi Society".